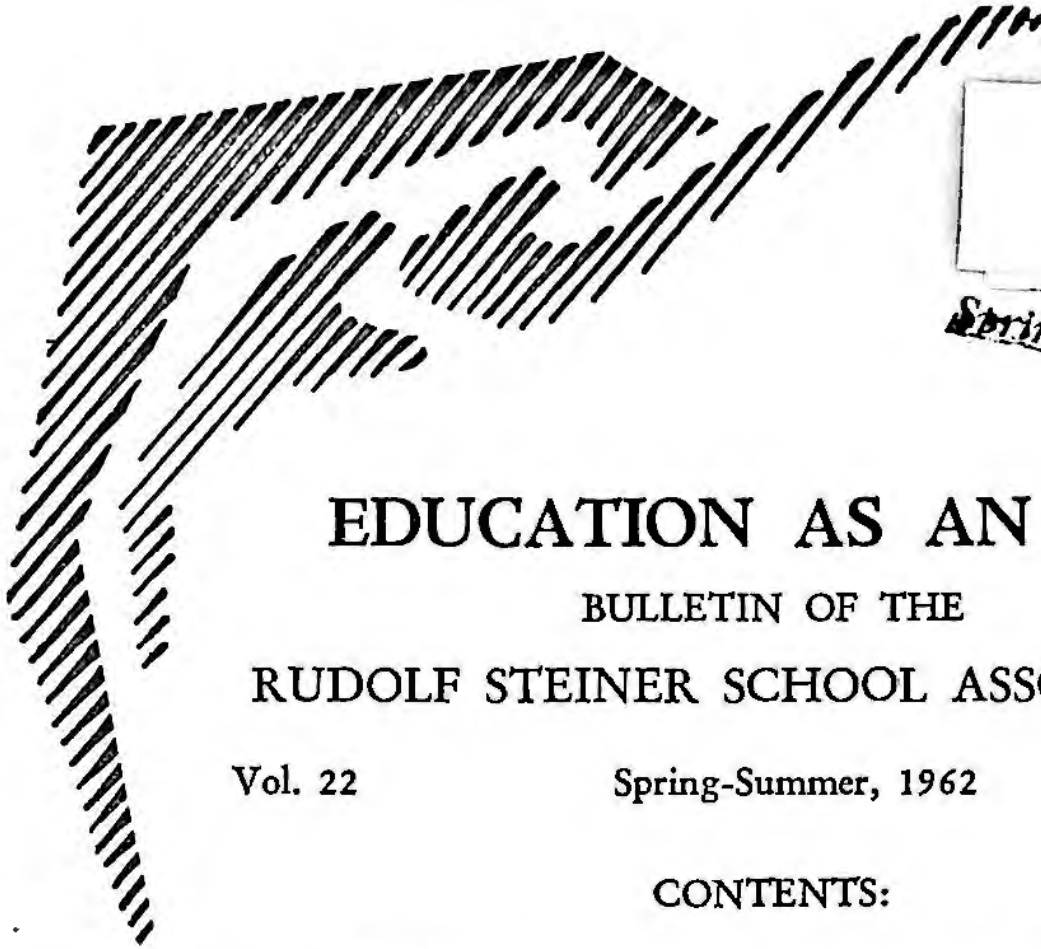




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EDUCATION AS AN ART

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FAIRY TALES

Among all claimants to classical status in children's literature the fairy tales stand first. A search for critical standards and the bones of the central tradition must begin with them. Let us briefly list their salient features. They are stories that are strongly patterned, with rhythmic repetition in matching episodes, verbal formulae, and recurring songs and charms. Simple in plot and without subplot, the stories move briskly, from action to action, untrammelled by description or exposition. Their moral universe is also simple, though sometimes with subtle undertones: the struggle of good against evil, with the weaker protagonist on the side of good and always winning. While their world is a world of marvels, spacious and mysterious, the foreground is always vividly objectified with homely detail. It is a world in which the relationship between human beings and animals and plants and even inanimate things is extraordinarily intimate. Above all, the telling is important: direct, exact, animated, humorous, the narrator believes in his story and relives it with zest. One can hear his voice with its personal tone and rhythm.

These are the essential points, baldly summarized without any attempt to show the beauty of the tales and the aura of poetic suggestion emanating from them. In the words of great story-tellers, such as Perrault or the Grimms,

they sweep the reader up to peaks of exaltation, sometimes even in a single phrase. It is impossible to convey the impact in Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty" of the first words of the Princess after the Prince wakes her from her magic sleep with a kiss: "Is it you, my prince? I have been waiting for you so long." Or that of the Grimm's Rumpelstiltskin when he refuses to take riches instead of the promised baby: "No, something human is dearer to me than all the treasures of the earth" . . .

—WILLIAM LIPKIND

This excerpt, part of a review of Spring books for young people, in the issue for May 12, 1962, is reprinted with the kind permission of the Saturday Review of Literature. William Lipkind, an anthropologist at N.Y.U., has written Boy of the Islands, Boy with a Harpoon, Days to Remember. He and artist Nicolas Mordvinoff have collaborated on a number of picture books, among them The Two Reds and Finders Keepers.

* * * * *

George Macdonald was one of the great original writers of fairy tales. The Princess and the Goblin, The Princess and Curdie, At the Back of the North Wind are stories of true imagination, which no child should grow up without knowing and loving. Macdonald's voice, as William Lipkind describes that of all classic storytellers, has too "a distinct personality of its own, vivid and rhythmic but at the same time exact and credible; (there is) an uninterrupted, clear forward movement of the action; a simple moral universe with justice at its heart; a world with room in it for the wonderful; the kinship of man with all other living things."

PREFACE TO *The Light Princess, and Other Fairy Tales*

That we have in English no word corresponding to the German Märchen drives us to use the word Fairy Tale, regardless of the fact that the tale may have nothing to do with any sort of fairy. Were I asked, *what is a fairy tale?* I should reply, Read *Undine*:* that is a fairy tale; then read this and that as well, and you will see what is a fairy tale.

Were I further begged to describe the fairy tale, or define what it is, I would make answer, that I should as soon think of describing the abstract human face, or stating what must go to constitute a human being. A fairy tale is just a fairy tale, as a face is just a face; and of all fairy tales I know, I think *Undine* the most beautiful . . . I will but say some things helpful to the reading, in right-minded fashion, of such tales as follow.

Some thinkers would feel sorely hampered if at liberty to use no forms but such as existed in nature, or to invent nothing save in accordance with the laws of the world of the senses; but it must not therefore be imagined that they desire escape from the region of law. Nothing lawless can show the least reason why it should exist, or could at best have more than a semblance of life.

The natural world has its laws, and no man must interfere with them in the way of presentment any more than in the way of use, but they themselves may suggest laws of other kinds, and man may, if he pleases, invent a little world of his own, with its own laws; for there is that in him which delights in calling up new forms - which is the nearest, perhaps, he can come to

* La Motte-Fouqué. *Undine*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1932

creation. When such forms are new embodiments of old truths, we call them products of the Imagination. When they are mere inventions, however lovely, I should call them the work of the Fancy: in either case, Law has been diligently at work.

His world once invented, the highest law that comes next into play is, that there shall be harmony between the laws by which the new world has begun to exist; and in the process of his creation, the inventor must hold by those laws. The moment he forgets one of them, he makes the story, by its own postulates, incredible. To be able to live a moment in an imagined world, we must see the laws of its existence obeyed. Those broken, we fall out of it. The imagination in us, whose exercise is essential to the most temporary submission to the imagination of another, immediately, with the disappearance of Law, ceases to act.

Imagine the gracious creatures of some childlike region of Fairyland talking either Cockney or Gascon! Would not the tale, however lovelily begun, sink at once to the level of the burlesque - of all forms of literature the least worthy? A man's inventions may be stupid or clever, but if he do not hold by the laws of them, or if he make one law jar with another, he contradicts himself as an inventor, he is no artist. He does not rightly consort his instruments, or he tunes them in different keys. The mind of man is the product of live Law; it thinks by law, it dwells in the midst of law, it gathers from law its growth; with law, therefore, can it alone work to any result. Inharmonious, unconsorting ideas will come to a man, but if he try to use one of such, his work will grow dull, and he will drop it for mere lack of interest. Law is the soil in which alone beauty will grow; beauty is the only stuff in which Truth can be clothed; and you may, if you will, call Imagination the tailor that cuts her garments to fit her, and Fancy his journeyman that puts the pieces of them together, or perhaps at most works their button-holes. Obeying law, the maker works like his creator; not obeying law, he is such a fool as heaps a pile of stones and calls it a church.

In the moral world it is different: there a man may clothe in new forms, and for this employ his imagination freely, but he must invent nothing. He may not, for any purpose, turn its laws upside down. He must not meddle with the relations of live souls. The laws of the spirit of man must hold, alike in this world and in any world he may invent. It were no offence to suppose a world in which everything repelled instead of attracted, the things around it; it would be wicked to write a tale representing a man it called good as always doing bad things, or a man it called bad as always doing good things: the notion itself is absolutely lawless. In physical things a man may invent; in moral things he must obey — and take their laws with him into his invented world as well.

You write as if a fairy tale were a thing of importance: must it have a meaning?

It cannot help having some meaning; if it have proportion and harmony it has vitality, and vitality is truth. The beauty may be plainer in it than the truth, but without the truth the beauty could not be, and the fairy tale would give no delight. Every one, however, who feels the story, will read its meaning after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning in it, another will read another.

If so, how am I to assure myself that I am not reading my own meaning into it, but yours out of it?

Why should you be so assured? It may be better that you should read your meaning into it. That may be a higher operation of your intellect than the mere reading of mine out of it: your meaning may be superior to mine.

Suppose my child ask me what the fairy tale means, what am I to say?

If you do not know what it means, what is easier than to say so? If you do see a meaning in it, there it is for you to give him. A genuine work of art must mean many things; the truer its art, the more things it will mean. If my drawing, on the other hand, is so far from being a work of art that it needs THIS IS A HORSE written under it, what can it matter that neither you nor your child should know what it means? It is there not so much to convey a meaning as to *wake* a meaning. If it do not even wake an interest, throw it aside. A meaning may be there, but it is not for you. If, again, you do not know a horse when you see it, the name written under it will not serve you much. At all events, the business of the painter is not to teach zoology.

But indeed your children are not likely to trouble you about the meaning. They find what they are capable of finding, and more would be too much. For my part I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five.

A fairy tale is not an allegory. There may be allegory in it, but it is not an allegory. He must be an artist indeed who can, in any mode, produce a strict allegory that is not a weariness to the spirit . . .

A fairy tale, like a butterfly or a bee, helps itself on all sides, sips at every wholesome flower, and spoils not one. The true fairy tale is, to my mind, very like the sonata. We all know that a sonata means something; and where there is the faculty of talking with suitable vagueness, and choosing metaphor sufficiently loose, mind may approach mind, in the interpretation of a sonata, with the result of a more or less contending consciousness of sympathy. But if two or three men sat down to write each what the sonata meant to him, what approximation of definite idea would be the result? Little enough - and that little more than needful. We should find it had roused related if not identical feelings, but probably not one common thought. Has the sonata therefore failed? Had it undertaken to convey, or ought it to be expected to impart anything defined, anything notionally recognizable?

But words are not music; words at least are meant and fitted to carry a precise meaning!

It is very seldom indeed that they carry the exact meaning of any user of them! And if they can be so used as to convey definite meaning, it does not follow that they ought never to carry anything else. Words are live things that may be variously employed to various ends. They can convey a scientific fact, or throw a shadow of her child's dream on the heart of a mother. They are things to put together like the pieces of a dissected map, or to arrange like the notes on a stave. Is the music in them to go for nothing? It can hardly help the definiteness of a meaning: is it therefore to be disregarded? They have length and breadth and outline: have they nothing to do with depth? Have they only to describe, never to impress? Has nothing any claim to their use but the definite?

The cause of a child's tears may be altogether undefinable; has the mother therefore no word for his vague misery? That may be strong in colour which has no evident outline. A fairy tale, a sonata, a gathering storm, a limitless night seizes you and sweeps you away: do you begin at once to wrestle with it and ask whence its power over you, whither it is carrying you? The law of each is in the mind of its composer; that law makes one man feel this way, another man feel that way. To one the sonata is a world of odour and beauty, to another of soothing only and sweetness. To one the cloudy rendezvous is a wild dance, with a terror at its heart; to another, a majestic march of heavenly hosts, with Truth in their centre pointing their course, but as yet restraining her voice. The greatest forces lie in the region of the uncomprehended.

I will go further.—The best thing that you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is — not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself. The best Nature does for us is to work in us such moods in which thoughts of high import arise. Does any aspect of Nature wake but *one* thought? Does she ever suggest only one definite thing? Does she make any two men in the same place at the same moment think the same thing? Is she therefore a failure because she is not definite? Is it nothing that she rouses the something deeper than the understanding — the power that underlies thoughts? Does she not set feeling, and so thinking at work? Would it be better that she did this after one fashion and not after many fashions? Nature is mood-engendering, thought-provoking: such ought the sonata, such ought the fairy tale, to be.

But a man may then imagine in your work what he pleases, perhaps what you never meant.

Not what he pleases, but what he can. If he be not a true man, he will draw evil out of the best: we need not mind how he treats any work of art! If he be a true man, he will imagine true things: what matter whether I meant them or not? They are there none the less that I cannot claim putting them there! One difference between God's work and man's is, that, while God's work cannot mean more than he meant, man's must mean more than he meant.

For in everything that God has made there is layer upon layer of ascending significance; also he expresses the same thought in higher and higher kinds of that thought: it is God's things, his embodied thoughts, which a man has to use, modified and adapted to his own purposes, for the expression of his thoughts; therefore he cannot help his words and figures falling into such combinations in the mind of another as he had not foreseen, so many are the thoughts allied to every other thought, so many are the relations involved in every figure, so many the facts hinted in every symbol. A man may well himself discover truth in what he wrote; for he was dealing all the time with thoughts beyond his own.

But surely you would explain your idea to one who asked you?

I say again, if I cannot draw a horse, I will not write **THIS IS A HORSE** under what I foolishly meant for one. Any key to a work of imagination would be nearly, if not quite, as absurd. The tale is there, not to hide, but to show: if it show nothing at your window, do not open your door to it; leave it out in the cold. To ask me to explain is to say, "Roses! Boil them, or we won't have them!" My tales may not be roses, but I will not boil them.

So long as I think my dog can bark, I will not sit up to bark for him.

If a writer's aim be logical conviction, he must spare no logical pains, not merely to be understood, but to escape being misunderstood. Where his object is to move by suggestion, to cause to imagine, then let him assail the soul of his reader as the wind assails an aeolian harp. If there be music in my reader, I would gladly wake it. Let fairy tale of mine go for a firefly that now flashes, now is dark, but may flash again. Caught in a hand which does not love its kind, it will turn into an insignificant, ugly thing that can neither flash nor fly.

The best way with music, I imagine, is not to bring the forces of our intellect to bear upon it, but to be still and let it work on that part of us for whose sake it exists. We spoil countless precious things by intellectual greed. He who will be a man and will not be a child, must, he cannot help himself, become a little man, that is, a dwarf. He will, however, need no consolation, for he is sure to think himself a very large creature indeed.

If any strain of my "broken music" make a child's eyes flash, or his mother's grow for a moment dim, my labour will not have been in vain.

GEORGE MACDONALD

GRATITUDE

From Spiritual Ground of Education

. . . In this age of ours many men have very little inner joy . . . they are beset by heavy doubts . . . this age has little capacity for deriving answers to its problems from out of the universe . . . modern man has not the strength to find consolation in a view of the universe when his personal situation troubles him. Why is this? Because in his education modern man has little opportunity to acquire a feeling of gratitude: gratitude namely that we should be alive at all as human beings within this universe. All our feelings should take their rise from a fundamental feeling of gratitude that the cosmic world has given us birth and given us a place within itself . . . This feeling is essential in a teacher, and it should be instinctive in every person who has the nurture of a child entrusted to him. Therefore the first thing of importance to be striven for in spiritual knowledge is the acquiring of thankfulness that a child has been given into our keeping by the universe.

In this respect reverence for the child, reverence and thankfulness, are not to be sundered. There is only one attitude towards a child which can give us the right impulse in education and nurture, and that is the religious attitude, neither more nor less. We feel religious in regard to many things. A flower in a meadow can bring this about when we take it as the creation of the divine spiritual order of the world. In face of lightning flashes from the clouds we feel religious if we see them in relation to the divine spiritual order of the world. And above all we must feel religious towards the child, for it comes to us from the depths of the universe as the highest manifestation of the nature of the universe, a bringer of tidings as to what the world is.

— RUDOLF STEINER

Dr. Herbert Hahn, appointed by Rudolf Steiner as one of the first teachers of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany, was especially active in the non-sectarian religion lessons at the school. As in all German schools, a time for religious instruction was provided for all pupils. Catholic priests, Protestant ministers and Jewish rabbis came regularly once or twice a week to teach "their" children. And for those children whose parents preferred a non-traditional, non-sectarian instruction, the "liberal religion lessons" were given at the same time as the others. It was an interesting experience to discover that the latter class grew continually in numbers.

In 1959 Dr. Hahn brought out a book that was a revised and enlarged version of a course of lectures he had held for the student-priests of the Christian Community. Into it came all the experience of decades of work in this particular field of instruction; but into it too came his fine and subtle sense for the artistic values on which depend our gropings for belief in and for the knowledge of a divine world.

This book, From the Fountain of Soul Powers, has not yet been translated into English; we feel honored to have the permission to bring short excerpts from the first two chapters and a story from Chapter III.*

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION FOR OUR TIME

... No education can be carried out successfully when only the intelligence is taken into account. There are other, deeper powers in us and these we have to awaken and develop, for we cannot do without their help—all those forces which lead to the creating and the appreciation of Art. They form indeed their own sphere; they have their own laws; and they are not comprehensible from a purely rationalistic standpoint. The intelligence can only recognize them, but it can also concede that they are an integral part of the whole man.

If this is admitted really seriously, something unique will be discovered: the intelligence begins to be sceptical of its own former scepticism (i.e. concerning religious values). It will ask itself, what if the religious forces, like the artistic ones, form their own realm which also belongs intrinsically to the whole nature of man? Perhaps they too have their own laws? If so, it would be fruitless, indeed quite absurd, to fight them continually. Instead, we should consider most carefully how best to cherish and develop them. For otherwise we would be overlooking realities. . .

Let us consider first of all the basis, the great cornerstone, of all religions. One of the liveliest meanings of the word 'religion' is to re-join, re-unite. To join what again? What was that earlier bond which we can try to renew in educating our children? Religion without a pre-existential connection of the soul with God and a divine world would be a contradiction. Religious education makes sense when through it we bring a child or a young person again to that unity with the divine from which he descended on entering earthly existence at birth. . .

From a distinctive point of view, the beginning of human life is not only a biological process but the starting point of an incarnation. It is a leave-taking from higher worlds, in order to grasp this earthly world with new organs. For all those who are concerned with the young as parents or

* Herbert Hahn: *Von den Quellkräften der Seele, Zur religiösen Unterweisung der Jugend.* Natura-Verlag, Arlesheim, Switzerland, 1959.

teachers, the high purpose must be to watch over the growing intensity of their bond with the sense world, and then to join with this in equal intensity a bond with the supersensible. It is just here that the way is open for religious instruction if this instruction wants truly to understand and evaluate its goal. . .

Let us be quite clear about it. In teaching religion the educator enters that very high sphere from which the child has descended. The following words, which Rudolf Steiner once spoke about education in general, apply here in a very particular and intimate way: "Do not be deceived by the sense impression of a large, mature, more or less fully developed adult bending down to a tiny, undeveloped, incomplete human being. In actuality, behind the small child looms up the majesty of his pre-earthly existence, which he has carried with him through the portal of birth. Teachers and educators can, through their labor, unfold the greatness of this inherent inner being of a child. They can never create it. They can only set it free."

* * * * *

In the primary classes in religion we often speak to the small children of the "heavenly house" from which they have come. It is described as a great, golden house that we no longer can see with our eyes; the sounds in it we no longer can hear with our ears; our angel, who was with us in the golden house and whom we no longer can see with ordinary eyes, has come with us from there and is with us on earth. Every night when we go to sleep, we go back to that house and stay there for a short time. Every morning when we wake up, we know this: last night we were in the great, golden house again.

We can characterize all this with the words of a very old, Middle High German verse:

*A golden path leads to a house,
A house that stands in heavenly fields.
Its pillars are of marble fine,
And on its walls are shining jewels
The Lord put in with loving care.
But no man goes into that house
Who has not laid aside his sins.*

We can tell little children, "Every night you go to the golden house and the path to it leads you through two great, wide countries, the land of dreams and the land of sleep. When you have been busy all day, learning your lessons and being good, when you have brought some happiness to the people around you, then the path will lead you right into the golden house. There you will find a table set for you with golden plates and golden bowls, and there your angel will sit with you at the table, and both of you will eat out of the golden plates and golden bowls. But it is heavenly food, not earthly food, that you get there. And it makes you wake up next morning very bright and cheerful, so that you start off gladly to school. All this comes from being in the golden house.

But whoever during the day has been lazy, whoever has played a trick on another child or kept his seat in the bus when an old man or woman had to stand up, whoever hasn't listened well to the lesson at school, that one

will not get into the golden house: he will have to stay out in the yard. The yard of that house is huge, and lonely, and bare. A great, dark tree stands in the center, and under the tree is a spring of water. Every bad thing you do, every good thing you neglect to do makes your angel's tears fall into the spring and that makes the water salty. And in the great dark tree is a bird that sings a sorrowful tune. When you wake up in the morning, you feel sad and tired, everything bothers you, you have to think about the dark tree and the tune the bird sang."

When one speaks to the children like this about the land of dreams and the land of sleep, and about their heavenly home, many of the questions are answered which they carry with them deep down in their hearts.

Another very fine story for younger children is the one about Mother Holle, about Gold-Marie and Black-Marie.

The first little girl is treated badly by her mother but she is good and helpful. One day, while she is busy spinning, her spindle falls into the well. Down she jumps into the water, in order to retrieve it. When she opens her eyes, she finds herself in a beautiful country. She goes her way and comes to an oven. The bread calls out: Pull me out, please pull me out or else I shall burn! So she pulls the bread out of the oven. Then she comes to an apple tree, full of fruit, and the tree calls out: Shake me, please shake me, my apples are ripe! So she shakes the apples off the tree. She goes a little further and reaches Mother Holle's house where she may live and work. Most of all, says Mother Holle, she must shake the feather beds until the feathers fly; then the people on earth will say, Look! it's snowing. The girl works hard for Mother Holle and does everything well. But after a time she gets so homesick that Mother Holle lets her go back to earth. As she goes under a huge gate, it opens at the top and a shower of gold falls over the girl and covers her from head to toe. When she gets home, the rooster on the well begins to crow:

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

Your golden girl's come back to you!

We know what happened to the other girl. By cheating she wanted to get all that the good one had earned. She refused to pull the bread out of the oven. She refused to shake the apple tree. At Mother Holle's she was so lazy that finally she was sent home. And now she believes that gold will rain down and cover her — but as the gate opens to let her through, down comes thick, black, sticky tar that covers her from head to toe, and so she comes home, 'a dirty girl,' as the rooster calls out.

It is very good to show the children this duality. First of all, above in heaven is the golden house. But another way to it leads through the deep water below. Both paths bring us forward to our goal.

This truth resounds to us also from the wisdom of ancient Egypt. A motto of Hermes Trismegistes, the 'triple supreme one,' puts it into a sublimely simple form:

*That which is below is as that above;
That which is above is as that below.
Nothing is greater, nothing is lesser,
And what there prevails is One.*

The children will ask, "If the things we see and do in the night are so important, how can we be ready for them?" The teacher can answer merely, "By being good; by doing good." If he is confident that what he says is true, his words will not sound like moralizing. And how effective such simple words as these can be, the teacher will experience again and again . . .

It is important to point out to children that the words they use in prayers are more than words, they are *acts*.

In one of his Mystery Plays Rudolf Steiner gave a tiny verse that is especially suitable as an evening prayer. It is a kind of signpost to the golden house:

May powers of light

Carry me to my spirit's home.

* * * * *

A TALE FROM THE ORIENT

There was once a father who lived with his many sons in a large golden house. They would sit at their great table and have their meals together. The father was good to all his sons and they loved him.

One day he said to one of them: "Now the time has come for you to go on your journey." So the son took leave of his brothers and was taken by his father to a golden stairway that he had to descend. While he was still standing on the uppermost step, ready to go down, his father said: "There is not much that I can give you to take on your journey—just this little gold box. Carry it wherever you go, and whatever happens do not lose it. You are never to open it. Bring it back to me when you return." This the son promised to do. And he bade his father farewell.

He went down the long, long stairway very, very far. At the last step he looked back once more, but now he saw nothing behind him except a steep black wall. In front of him stretched an immense and wildly foaming sea. There was just a narrow path between the wall and the sea. Now fear overcame him, and longing for his father's house. But he saw a little boat coming toward him from across the sea. It was coming to fetch him. He took the oars and rowed himself over the rolling waves. Presently a great storm arose. The tall waves threw his little craft against a rock, so that the oars broke and the boat was leaking. Fear again overpowered him, but he remembered the little gold box his father had given him. He pressed it against his heart and jumped boldly into the sea.

The waves carried him to an island. There were many people there, and it seemed that they had been waiting for him. They received him with joy, calling "Glory, glory to our King!" They filled the air with their jubilant shouting. At first he did not understand that it concerned himself, as again and again they called "Glory, glory to our King!" He was finally surrounded by the people and taken to a most beautiful palace, up into a great hall where the throne stood. A purple cloak was put around his shoulders, a crown was placed upon his head, and then the celebration of the crowning began. A huge

table was set for the festivity that seemed to have no end. Many guests came; music and singing was all about. It lasted for a day and a night and then another day and a night. He looked into all the happy faces around him. There was only one old man who seemed not to want to take part in the festivity. His noble face was serious and sad.

The young king beckoned to this old man and led him into an adjoining room and asked him: "Can you tell me what is going to happen to me? Why do you look at me so seriously and sadly?" The old man replied: "It is because I am thinking of the end of the year." "Why?" asked the king. And the old man replied: "Every year the waves of the sea carry a new king to our shore. He is received with joy and gladness. He will reign and gain honor for himself and be loved by his people. But when his hour comes, the purple cloak will be torn from his shoulders and the crown will be taken from his head. He will be forced into a narrow black boat in which he can neither sit nor stand, but must lie flat, and he will be taken to a lonely, quite barren island in the middle of the ocean." The young king was frightened. "Is there nothing one can do about it?" he asked. "I cannot tell you", the old man replied, "but ask the Night and follow its advice." Greatly perturbed the young king rushed into the hall. "Silence!" he shouted. "Silence, all of you! Send the musicians home! Clear the table away! I want no more feasting." He retired to his bedroom and before he fell asleep he put the little box his father had given him under his pillow.

That night he had a wonderful dream. He saw his father's house and his father and his brothers. And he heard his father's voice saying to him: "Care not for the rich, care for the poor! Care not for joys, care for sorrows!" When he awoke in the morning, he resolved to follow this advice and to visit his people. He traveled all over his kingdom; he saw the courtiers and the rich men, but also he invited the poor to come to him, and the beggars who were shyly trying to hide themselves. He had them always around him, even though at his palace people mocked him and made fun of him. But it came about that no one who spoke with him could tell him an untruth. His people began to love him. From week to week he felt more free. Then one day he saw the old man again, and the old man's face looked brighter but still serious. That night when he lay down he pressed the little gold box against his heart and said his prayer. He fell asleep and again in a dream saw the beautiful golden house of his father. He heard his father's voice saying: "Build twelve ships. Load them with young trees and kernels of grain—everything that will sprout and bear fruit, and have them taken to the lonely island in the ocean." So early the next morning he ordered his builders to build the twelve ships. He had them loaded with all that his father had advised, and sent them forth to the lonely island.

And now the year had passed. The hour had come. The young king knew it well; he knelt in his room and waited. He had already taken off his crown. He heard murmurs, steps, someone entered the room. He was expecting them to come to take his cloak from him. But a gentle hand touched his shoulder. It was one of the beggars he had helped. A voice was speaking: "Arise, oh King, for you have won our love, we shall never forget you, you shall keep this cloak." So he arose and went down to the water's edge and saw a mighty sunrise that made the waves look purple. Across the water came the narrow black boat. He entered it and lay down and fell asleep. It carried him across

the shining waves until it came upon rock. This woke the king and he left his boat. But was this the lonely, barren island? There were trees in bloom, flowers, sprouting green everywhere.

Then at once he saw a huge wall. It opened and there were the golden stairs leading to his father's house. His father was standing at the top with his arms opened wide to receive him. "Did you bring me back the little gold box?" asked the father. "Yes, father," answered the young king. "Did you ever open it?" "No, father. I return it to you just as you gave it to me." "Ah! then open it now," said the father. So he opened it and there were pictures of his father's golden house, pictures of his brothers, pictures of the father himself. "Is this what I have been carrying about with me all this time without knowing?" he exclaimed. "Look again!" said his father. This time he saw inside its cover all of the kingdom over which he had reigned, pictures of his palace and of all the poor people and the beggars whom he had helped. It made him very happy. "May I bring all of this with me?" he asked, and he heard the voice of his father reply: "You may bring it all. They will all be with you in the golden house."

—HERBERT HAHN

(translated by Ruth Pusch and Clara von Woedtke)



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